What follows is a personal statement by Jack Valenti, former Special Assistant to President Lyndon Johnson concerning the movie "JFK."

This statement is not about who shot President Kennedy, not about whether the assassin was Lee Harvey Oswald or some goombah Savonarola, not about whether the Warren Commission was right, wrong, or sloppy. The fact is, if you don't believe the Warren Commission report, you have your pick of more conspiracy theories than rabbits in a warren.

But in his movie, Oliver Stone indicts President Lyndon Johnson (and the Warren Commission) as a conspirator in a vast cover-up of the assassination of President Kennedy. It is that accusation that prompts this statement.

This is **my personal statement.** It has no connection to my responsibilities in the movie industry. Indeed, I waited to speak out because I didn't want to do anything which might affect the movie's theatrical release, or the Oscar balloting. But I cannot and will not allow Mr. Stone to foul the memory of Lyndon Johnson.

I don't know how History will regard LBJ a generation from now. Perhaps because of Vietnam, President Johnson will just have to settle for being the greatest American President ever

for the under-educated young, the poor and the old, the sick and the black, all those pressed against the wall because of circumstances beyond their control, and about whom few cared. But Lyndon Johnson cared. He cared very much. That is why he put his political future to hazard to do something specific and lasting to remedy their plight.

Why, then, did Mr. Stone smear LBJ?

Mr. Stone came to a 'Conclusion' which goes like this: President Kennedy decided to pull out ALL troops then in Vietnam, some 16,000 fighting men which, according to Mr. Stone, riled a lot of folks, including Vice President Johnson. But there is absolutely no confirmable evidence of this supposed presidential "decision." None. Indeed, there is one scene in the movie depicting LBJ reversing a JFK National Security Action Memorandum when the opposite was true.

Mr. Stone hurls at Lyndon Johnson one of the deadliest slurs one human can lay on another, a charge of accessory to and an accomplice in a cover-up of the murder of the President of the United States.

But Mr. Stone knew full well that if his 'Conclusion' had no base, his film would fail. So, Mr. Stone's prime search was to

find "truth" to connect Lyndon Johnson to the murder and the cover up.

How was Mr. Stone to buttress this quackery? He found his answer by reading two books, one of which contained the hallucinatory bleatings of an author named Jim Garrison, a discredited former district attorney in New Orleans. And amidst a slag heap of loony theories there it is, on page 330 of the paperback version of Garrison's book, the charge that LBJ and the Warren Commission deliberately covered up. Of course, Garrison presents no evidence of any kind to accompany this terrible smear.

The question that this movie doesn't ask, much less answer, is how come Oliver Stone places such faith in Garrison whose wild surmises leaked credibility from the start; whose proof is non-existent; whose loose-fibered charges never found allies among any group, even those who passionately support a 'conspiracy theory'; whose indictments are as soiled as his destruction of an innocent man, Clay Shaw. It took the jury less than 30 minutes to acquit Shaw of all charges. Read Tom Wicker's piece in the New York TIMES (Dec. 15, 1991) which discloses that Garrison falsified evidence and tampered with testimony in order to get Shaw.

My own rebuttal to Mr. Stone comes down to this: I was there, and he wasn't.

I was there in the motorcade in Dallas when by a senseless act of mindless malice, a gallant young President was slain in the street. I was on Air Force One on its flight from Dallas to Washington, the flag-draped coffin of the 35th President in the rear of the aircraft. I stood two feet from LBJ when he was sworn in as the 36th President aboard the plane. I spent that first night of his presidency in his home.

As a newly minted Special Assistant to the President, I actually lived for two months on the third floor of the White House. I rarely left the President's side during the long days and nights of his early presidency. I was there in meeting after meeting when key decisions were taken. I read every paper that crossed the President's desk, including the most Top Secret documents and was an ear-witness to many of his most confidential phone conversations. I participated in practically all the meetings on Vietnam from November 22, 1963 to June, 1966. I was privy to the innermost thoughts of the President and I knew the views of JFK's aides, all of whom LBJ asked to stay on to counsel him, which means those who were the closest advisers to President Kennedy were also the closest advisers to President Johnson.

I was there when President Johnson ruminated about the assassination, and the urgency to enlist the most prestigious citizens within the Republic to inspect this murder carefully, objectively, swiftly. I was there when Chief Justice Warren agreed to the assignment. I knew some of the members of the Warren Commission very well: the Chief Justice, Senator Richard Russell of Georgia, House Majority Leader Hale Boggs of Louisiana, Senator John Sherman Cooper of Kentucky, and Congressman (later President) Gerald Ford of Michigan, the sole living member of the Commission. They were men of integrity. They were devoted to their duty. They cared deeply about their country. Each of them understood and respected the constitutional strands that bind together this free and loving land. To indict these men of honor, along with Lyndon Johnson, is vicious, cruel and false.

Does any sane human being truly believe that President Johnson, the Warren Commission members, law enforcement officers, CIA, FBI, White House aides, and assorted thugs, weirdos, frisbee throwers, ALL conspired TOGETHER as plotters in Garrison's wacky sightings? And then for almost twenty-nine years, nothing leaked? But you have to believe it if you think well of any part of this accusatory lunacy. Of course, Mr. Stone is himself convinced, which proves that when a man

is determined to believe, the absurdity of the doctrine only serves to confirm his faith.

In scene after scene Mr. Stone plasters together the half true and the totally false and from that he manufactures the plausible. No wonder that many young people, gripped by the movie, leave the theater convinced they have been witness to the Truth.

In much the same way, young German boys and girls in 1941 were mesmerized by Leni Riefenstahl's "TRIUMPH OF THE WILL," in which Adolf Hitler was depicted as a new-born God. Both "JFK" and "TRIUMPH OF THE WILL" are equally a propaganda masterpiece, and equally a hoax. Mr. Stone and Leni Riefenstahl have another genetic linkage: neither of them carried a disclaimer on their film that its contents were mostly pure fiction.

The final displays of Mr. Stone's intellectual nihilism are (1) he cast Garrison in the role of Chief Justice Earl Warren! The great protector of human rights is impersonated by the great violator of human rights. And (2) Mr. Stone inserts Garrison into the frame, face and voice of one of America's most beloved and believable movie stars, Kevin Costner!

Which is why I say that no matter his brilliant creative skills, and they are more than considerable, Mr. Stone has with deliberate forethought put on the screen a monstrous charade about President Johnson that ranks right up there with the best work of old-guard Soviet revisionist historians. This movie takes the Titus Oates Award for Best Counterfeit Testimony, and retires the Trophy!